

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 CU-02
/067 W

-----089110 252117Z /65

O R 241355Z JUN 77

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6286

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JOHANNESBURG 1632

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF

SUBJECT: POLICE AND STUDENT POSITIONS HARDEN AS SOWETO TENSES

REF: JOHANNESBURG 1490, 1500, 1620, 1622

1. SUMMARY: SOWETO HAS QUITTED DOWN TODAY AS POLICE ANNOUNCED A
"HARDER LINE" TOWARDS RIOTING STUDENTS AND OTHERS. CASUALTY FIGURE FOR

YESTERDAY (JUNE 23) AS ANNOUNCED IN PRESS INDICATES THREE DEAD (TWO
AS A RESULT OF YOUTHS STONING A TRUCK WHICH THEN CRASHED INTO A
SOWETO HOUSE) AND 20 TO 30 WOUNDED. RIOTERS ATTACKED TRUCKS AND
POLICE VEHICLES WITH ROCKS, POLICE RESPONDING WITH BIRD SHOT. END
SUMMARY.

2. SOWETO'S FRAGILE PEACE, ENFORCED LAST WEEK BY THE INFLUX OF SQUADS
OF PRETORIA-BASED RIOT POLICE, WAS SHATTERED YESTERDAY AS MOBS OF
STONE-THROWING YOUTHS ATTACKED VEHICLES AND BARRICATED STREETS IN
SOWETO. THE OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE APPARENTLY CAUGHT EVERYONE BY
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SURPRISE, MOST NOTABLY THE POLICE (WHO PRIDE THEMSELVES ON THEIR
INFORMATION), AND THE DEMONSTRATION APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN WITHOUT
DIRECTION.

3. SOWETO POLICE STILL FOLLOWING DIRECTIVES TO REFRAIN FROM GUNFIRE,
ATTEMPTED TO CONTROL CROWDS, BUT CAME UNDER SEVERE ATTACK FROM BANDS
OF ROCK THROWING YOUTHS. BRIG VISSER, SOWETO POLICE CHIEF,

INDICATED POLICE HAD ABOUT RUN OUT OF PATIENCE BY SAYING "I THINK WE HAVE PLAYED IT LOW KEY LONG ENOUGH. IF THEY WANT TROUBLE THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE TROUBLE."

4. SOME STUDENTS CLAIMED MARCHES WERE PEACEFUL, BUT OTHERS DEGENERATED

QUICKLY INTO INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS ON ANY AND ALL VEHICLES, PARTICULARLY POLICE VEHICLES. POLICE ATTEMPTED TO USE TEARGAS BUT INJURIES REPORTED FROM POLICE GUNFIRE AS PRESS REPORTS TELL OF INCIDENTS OF POLICE BEING SURROUNDED AND STONED AND BIRD SHOT EMPLOYED.

5. RAND DAILY MAIL ARTICLE LIKENS TACTICES EMPLOYED IN MARCH ON JOHANNESBURG POLICE HEADQUARTERS TO US CIVIL RIGHTS STRATEGY AND ALLEGED STUDENTS COPIED TACTICS DESCRIBED TO THEM BY AMB YOUNG DURING RECENT JOHANNESBURG VISIT.

6. COMMENT: THIS LATEST SOWETO CRISIS APPEARS TO BE TAKING ON AN INCREASINGLY PREDICTABLE CHARACTER. AS DISCUSSED REFTELS, THE STUDENTS ARE LARGELY DISORGANIZED, WITH TSOTSI ELEMENTS PLAYING A DISRUPTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE ROLE. BRIG VISSER IS BEING SQUEEZED HARDER AND HARDER IN HIS EFFORTS TO TAKE A REASONABLE LINE. THE INGREDIENTS FOR A TRAGEDY RIVALING JUNE 1976 ARE PRESENT AS THE POLICE AND STUDENTS POSITION BOTH APPEAR TO BE HARDENING.
KIRBY

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Message Attributes

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